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## Viewing cable 06ISLAMABAD5123, A/S HILLEN VISIT TO PAKISTAN

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06ISLAMABAD5123</a>	<a href="#">2006-03-28 08:54</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">SECRET</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Islamabad</a>

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2015

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SUBJECT: A/S HILLEN VISIT TO PAKISTAN

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Introduction: On his March 15-18 visit to Pakistan, A/S John Hillen and PM/RSAT Tom Canahuate met with senior Government of Pakistan (GOP) officials, as well as Pakistan's top military leadership. Describing his role in soliciting support for USG security assistance to Pakistan from the U.S. Congress, A/S Hillen urged Pakistan's defense leaders to come to a decision soonest on the desired configuration for its purchase of F-16s. A/S Hillen described the process by which the Administration notifies Congress of the transfer of defense assets, and counseled the Pakistanis on steps they could take to facilitate Congressional approval of the F-16 transfer. Turning to the Global War on Terror (GWOT), A/S Hillen praised Pakistan's commitment to routing anti-Coalition militants and other extremists in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Pak-Afghan border, and sought Pakistani perspectives on how the U.S. could best configure its security assistance to support Pakistan's security operations in the region. Many Pakistani interlocutors raised questions regarding the expanding bilateral relationship between the U.S. and India, noting that it has led to much public speculation as to the value that Washington ascribes to the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. A/S Hillen stated flatly that President Bush does not view our bilateral relations with India and with Pakistan as a zero sum game; he stressed that the Administration seeks a sustained, strategic relationship with Pakistan. End introduction.

National Defense College (NDC)  
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¶2. (SBU) At NDC Commandant LTG Raza Muhammed Khan and his staff briefed A/S Hillen on the institution's history, mission and organization. In a broad discussion of security issues, LTG Raza raised a number of "irritants" in the Pakistani-Afghanistan relationship, citing difficulties in achieving effective security cooperation along the common border and Pakistan's vulnerability vis-a-vis India's "foreign hand," which he alleged is operating out of Afghanistan to destabilize Balochistan. Raza voiced his concern at the expanding U.S.-Indian relationship, saying that new Delhi received "far more than it deserved" during President Bush's recent visit. A/S Hillen assured LTG Raza that although India is an important global power with whom the U.S. has a broad and complex relationship, this does not detract from the sustained and enduring partnership that the U.S. and Pakistan have built over decades. A/S Hillen and LTG Raza agreed that NDC will play a vital role as the U.S. and Pakistan strive for a partnership of strategic vision, not simply military hardware.

Ministry of Defense (MoD)  
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¶3. (C) At the MoD, A/S Hillen was received by Minister of State Zahid Hamid and Additional Secretary RDML (ret.) A.H. Chaudhary. Hamid thanked the U.S. for its assistance following the October 8 South Asian earthquake. A/S Hillen turned the conversation to the value of the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, which he would like to expand for Pakistan. When Hillen asked for an assessment of Government of Pakistan's (GOP) current thinking on F-16 aircraft purchase, Minister Hamid said that the GOP is definitely interested in purchasing new aircraft, as well as refurbishing its current fleet and perhaps acquiring airframes through third-country buy-backs. (Note: Hamid was

not specific as to the number of new aircraft the GOP would seek. End note.) Hillen encouraged the MoD to forward its desired mix of F-16s to the USG as soon as possible, so that the administration can move forward with Congressional Notification on the transfer. Minister Hamid was pleased to

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hear A/S Hillen say that he is trying to increase USG financial support for Pakistani forces currently engaged in security operations in the Tribal Areas along the Afghan border. Recognizing Pakistan's leading role in international peace-keeping operations, Hillen also encouraged the MoD to consider offering training to African militaries interested in enhancing their conflict prevention and stabilization capacities.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)  
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14. (C) At the MFA, Chief of Protocol (and former Director General - Disarmament) Nazir Hussain briefed A/S Hillen on Pakistan's programs to enhance its non-proliferation regime. The Protocol Chief expressed gratitude to the U.S. for earthquake relief assistance, but also shared deep dismay that President Bush had resurrected the A.Q. Khan legacy by citing Pakistan's non-proliferation record as the reason the U.S. would not consider offering Islamabad a civil nuclear deal to parallel that with India. "Your man cut Musharraf off at the knees" with that public comment, Hussain said, noting that his President has a tough time selling his close relationship with the U.S. to a deeply skeptical Pakistani public. (Note: Nazir Hussain's briefing on a special PM program will be reported septel. End note). Additional Secretary (Americas) Shahid Kamal told A/S Hillen that

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Pakistan is looking forward to moving forward after the successful visit by President Bush earlier in March. The public now has high expectations for the bilateral relationship, which presents a challenge to both sides. When Hillen asked for one area in which Pakistan could use U.S. assistance, Kamal quickly took the opportunity to name two: education and market access for textiles. Additional Secretary for International Organizations Tariq Usman Haider

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asked to see A/S Hillen to discuss the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), asking whether the U.S. would be willing to discuss possible Pakistani PSI participation; A/S Hillen agreed to take the question back to his T-Bureau colleagues in Washington.

Pakistan Air Force Head Quarters  
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15. (C) At PAF HQ March 17, Air Vice Marshall (AVM) Khalid Chaudhry (Deputy Chief of Air Staff for Operations) and Air Commodore Jamshed listened carefully as A/S Hillen outlined concerns raised by some Members of Congress regarding the pending sale of F-16s to Pakistan. AVM Chaudhry assured A/S Hillen that Pakistan is prepared to address all USG security concerns regarding the F-16s. Citing PAF's long history of cooperation with USAF, he was perplexed that some in the U.S. are still anxious about Pakistan's security protocols for the F-16s. Chaudhry acknowledged that the Chinese JF-17 (another staple in the PAF fleet) is simply not comparable to the F-16 in terms of quality, particularly its avionics and weapons systems. Chaudhry then contrasted PAF's F-16 fleet to the array of fighters possessed by the Indian Air Force (IAF), supported by strong defense acquisition relationships with the U.S. and Israel. "The math just doesn't add up," Chaudhry said, admitting that the PAF has no hope of matching the IAF's resources. Even the proposed F-16 purchase will not make that much difference in the relative imbalance of power, although it will enable Pakistan to maintain a minimum deterrent capability. The F-16s have acquired a mythic

quality in Pakistan, AVM Chaudhry admitted, taking on an inflated symbolic importance in the public imagination. He concluded by asking A/S Hillen to ensure that the F-16 deal has enough sweeteners to appeal to the public -- a complete squadron of new F-16s, with JDAM and night-vision capability -- but not to offer the PAF things that it cannot afford.

16. (C) Warming to his subject, Chaudhry told the delegation

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that Pakistan would certainly establish adequate security protocols for the F-16s, but that at the end of the day, the U.S. simply needs to trust its partner. He cautioned that the U.S. should not "mock" Pakistan by offering "bone-yard" F-16s as part of the sale, saying that offering to transfer mothballed aircraft only plays into the hand of President Musharraf's extremist enemies, who already find a ready audience amongst Pakistan's uneducated masses. In contrast, Chaudhry said, the Chinese "understand the Pakistani psyche" and therefore "they offer us everything," always on advantageous financial terms.

17. (S) Given all that Pakistan has done for the U.S., Chaudhry said, Pakistan's military leaders have a difficult time maintaining positive attitudes toward the U.S. amongst enlisted personnel. He cited the susceptibility of the enlisted ranks -- most of whom come from rural villages -- to the influence of extremist Islamic clerics: "You can't imagine what a hard time we have trying to get to trim their beards." (Note: This last comment refers to the tradition of conservative Muslims to grow full beards as a sign of piety. End note.) Chaudhry claimed to receive reports monthly of acts of petty sabotage, which he interpreted as an effort by Islamists amongst the enlisted ranks to prevent PAF aircraft from being deployed in support of security operations in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Afghan border. (Note: Speaking off the record, Chaudhry told A/S Hillen that PAF aircraft are regularly called to provide air support to military and security forces when they get into tight spots in the FATA...dryly adding that Army brass and the ground forces commanders would deny it. End note.)

Vice Chief of Army Staff (VCOAS)

18. (C) VCOAS GEN Ahdan Saleem Hyat greeted A/S Hillen with thanks for American generosity and steadfast support following the October 8 earthquake, fondly describing how U.S. Chinook helicopters became a symbol of the relief effort. He offered his condolences on the deaths of two Embassy Karachi employees in a March 2 suicide bombing, before turning to Pak-Afghan relations. Praising the Tripartite Commission, GEN Ahsan opined that increased mil-mil interaction and cooperation -- including exchanges and intelligence-sharing -- would squelch the unhelpful public bickering widely reported in the media in recent weeks. GEN Ahsan renewed a proposal first presented to GEN Abizaid and LTG Eikenberry on March 6 to incorporate Afghan National Army (ANA) troops into a joint Pak-U.S. counter-terrorism (CT) exercise scheduled for May 2006. GEN Ahsan said that Pakistan must succeed in its current CT operations in the FATA along the Aghan border for its own sake. Grateful for U.S. assistance thus far, GEN Ahsan said that future assistance must be more sharply focused, particularly citing Pakistan's need for top-of-the-line air assault assets equipped with night-vision capability. Ahsan gave special emphasis to the need to minimize collateral damage in the FATA, in order not to alienate the local population whose cooperation was critical to identifying and dislodging militant forces seeking refuge in the area. A/S Hillen responded that the U.S. fully understood the benefits of night operations in support of a counter-insurgency campaign. He also praised GEN Ahsan's description of the GOP's integrated strategy to extend government control to the FATA, securing military gains with development assistance and political engagement.

Field Trip to Shahbaz and Mushaf Air Bases

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¶9. (C) On March 16, A/S Hillen led a U.S. delegation to the Shahbaz Air Base near Jacobabad, Sindh Province, for

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briefings on the Falcon Talon F-16 joint USAF-PAF exercise. After an initial greeting and briefing by Base Commander Air Commodore Athar Bukhari, A/S Hillen and delegation toured the airbase and visited with USAF F-16 ground crew and support staff. The Falcon Talon exercise is the first unified USAF/PAF exercise on Pakistani soil. The exercises covered daytime air combat intercepts and unified strike missions. Non-flying exercise objectives covered EOD, flight safety and quality assurance. On March 17, A/S Hillen and delegation traveled to Mushaf Air Base in Sargodha, which has been the home of Pakistan's F-16 fleet since 1983. The delegation received a thorough briefing of security and maintenance procedures at the base before touring key facilities.

¶10. (U) This cable has been cleared by A/S Hillen.  
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